

**1 Thessalonians 1: 10; "To Wait from His Son from Heaven",
Sermon # 6 in the series - "A Persevering Faith", Delivered by
Pastor Paul Rendall on March 30th, 2008, in the Afternoon
Worship Service.**

The last time that we were together around this book, I spoke to you about the fact that the believers in Thessalonica became examples of the believer to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believed, as it says in verse 7. Paul commends them very highly for their faith and their witness to Christ which was "sounded forth", not only in Macedonia and Achaia but, as he says, "in every place." We asked the question, "What was it about the example of these believers that Paul so highly commended? Well, as we looked at those verses, we saw that there were 3 areas of commendation which Paul mentioned concerning them. The 1st area where he commended them was for their becoming a gospel trumpet. The Word of the Lord sounded forth from them. Their love for the Word of God was known by all men. Some people in their city did not love this fact, some respected it. But everyone was aware of the fact that these believers believed in God's will and God's word being revealed to them through the preaching of the Apostle Paul and the others with him. They received that word concerning Jesus Christ, that he was the only way of salvation, and it came to them in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and with much assurance. Because of God's powerful working they were most definitely converted and were zealous to turn away from the idols that they used to worship and serve the living God. And the Apostle also commended them for something else in which they became examples to all the believers of that day and this; and that was their waiting for God's Son from heaven, which is the subject which we want to take up this afternoon. What does it mean to "wait for God's Son from heaven?"

We are living in a day in which most believers in Jesus Christ believe in the doctrine of the Rapture of the Church. This is a belief which comes from the Premillennial Dispensational view of prophecy which was developed from about the 1840s on to the present day, and made very popular by the Scofield Reference Bible and the many books, both fictional and doctrinal, on the subject, that have come out over the past 100 years. Many who hold this view believe that Christ's Church will be taken up and out of this world to forever be with the Lord before "the great Tribulation", by our Lord's secretly and unexpectedly coming for them. They think of this deliverance in terms of this verse which we are studying. Some believe that this 7 year Tribulation which is supposedly coming soon

is to be seen as the "wrath of God" from which Christ's Church is to be delivered. But I would like to attempt to show you that this is not the case. Our Lord's return is a subject which has fascinated the minds of many Christians for years and so I joyfully undertake the task this afternoon to speak to you about what the Bible says about it in relation to the truth of verse 10, "to wait for His Son from heaven." I want to approach this study by trying to define Biblically what it means for all true believers to wait for God's Son from heaven, and secondly, what it means to be delivered from the wrath to come. So let us consider this subject from a spirit which is willing to accept the simple and straightforward teaching of Scripture and lay aside our preconceptions if we have them.

1st of all - What does it mean for all true believers to wait for God's Son from heaven?

First of all, I want to tell you that I can most confidently say that to "wait for God's Son from heaven" is what all Christians in every generation since Christ ascended, have been commanded to do. Turn with me to Luke 12 and verse 35. Here we find Jesus saying to His disciples, "Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately." "Blessed are those servants whom the master when he comes, will find watching." "Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them." "And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants." "But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into." "Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." "Then Peter said to Him, 'Lord do You speak this parable only to us, or to all people?' And the Lord said, 'Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season?' "Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes." "Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has." "But if that servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming, and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.'"

This is in my mind the most definitive passage that we have from the lips of our Lord as to what it means to "wait" for Him. He is coming again,

and it says that He is coming in an hour in which we do not expect. This could refer to the coming of God in judgment upon Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and no doubt does have a partial fulfillment in that great judgment upon the Jewish nation. Christ did come in judgment against the nation by ordaining and permitting the Romans under Titus to come and destroy their city and their temple as it says in Luke 19: 43 and 44. They did not recognize the time of their visitation by Christ. But we must also ask ourselves how this could possibly be the total fulfillment of what Jesus is saying? Peter is asking Jesus whether this parable applies to the Apostles and disciples of that day and time, or to all people, and he is met with the answer, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward...?" He does not limit it to that day or time. He is applying the truth of preparation for His coming to all the generations from that generation to which he spoke, all the way down through time to the one that we live in now. "Heaven and earth will pass away but His words will not pass away." And these words will continue to apply to all the generations in the future until the end of this age, the Day in which the Lord Jesus shall come back personally and visibly and judge the World.

Now how should we understand what Jesus is saying? We know that He has not come personally and visibly to judgment in this world yet, and when we think that many generations of people have been looking for that blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, it is hard to grasp what he is saying. I think that we can apply it in this way. Our Lord and Master would have every generation to be expecting His personal visible return in terms of preparing themselves for His coming to judge all men. Christians will have to give an account of themselves. This is one aspect of what they are waiting for. They are waiting for God's Son from heaven to return to judge the world. The other aspect of what they are waiting for and preparing for is their own death and meeting the Lord, when their spirit will be brought to heaven immediately upon their death. Even Christians are not sure of the time when the Lord will come for them in death. They must needs prepare themselves for it. Their further expectation is of the Day of resurrection when they will experience the Rapture of the Church. All Christians need to understand that no Christian will miss out on this great event. "For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, " it says in 1 Thessalonians 4: 15, "that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep." "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God." "And the dead in Christ shall rise first." "Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught

up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air." "And thus we shall always be with the Lord." This is the Rapture, but no Christian will miss it either dead or alive. "This same Jesus," the angel said at our Lord's ascension, "who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven." In the Day when Christ comes, all the dead in Christ shall rise. This will not be a secret coming, but open, public and visible. All of Christ's saints will rise together on that glorious day. Those who believe in Christ shall not be condemned, but they will give an account of themselves. Christ will be admired by all who believe, and those who disbelieve and those who are hypocrites shall be condemned. All men will be raised from the dead and judged on that great day and the question is; will they be prepared? They will be prepared if they have lived their lives thinking of Christ's return to judge them. They must repent and do the works which are pleasing to Him. Christ would have all of His disciples to live in such a way, every day, and at all times believing that it is of great concern to the Master what they are doing. Are they being faithful as servants and stewards or are they not?

To be a faithful servant and steward, Christians in all generations, and especially ministers of the gospel and of a church, should "Let their waists be girded and their lamps burning; and they themselves should be like men who wait for their Master." This is the parable that Peter speaks of. A servant is always watching and waiting to do his master's will. His long robe is pulled up and tucked in so that he might engage in the work that his master has called him to do. This is the way that the Christian should be spiritually in his or her mind. Their lamps are burning, their light is shining, so that all in the house of the church and everyone that comes to them from the world will be able to see the light of gospel truth and what it means for Christ's servants to be holy. The steward, the one who has been entrusted with truth, gives the other servants their portion of food in due season. He is not to think that his master is delaying and that he can afford to abuse the other servants in the master's house or to indulge himself in drinking and getting drunk. No, he is to be sober and alert and realize that the thief could break in at a time which he does not expect. The parable mentions that the master has gone to a wedding and these servants, who are all Christians in every generation are to be ready whenever he comes back, whether it is at 10 o'clock, or just before midnight or whether it is late, at 2 or 3 in the morning. A servant is to wait up and to watch to that he might be prepared to give an account of his services and what had been entrusted to him. It is a parable which gives us a picture of the grace of readiness at work in the soul of the believer, who as His servant is not to

think of Christ's return and preparation for it as something far distant in time, but something that must be prepared for now, and today, and every day that He gives us life and opportunity to serve Him. For this is what the Lord has told us that He expects. Many people, if they knew when the Lord was to return, they would think that it was not important what they did with their time up until the very point when he returned. But Christ is saying that all the days that we are given are important to Him in His final evaluation of us.

In verse 39, when Christ speaks of the master of the house not knowing what hour the thief would come, and he says that if the master of the house had known the hour of the thief's coming, he would not have allowed his house to be broken into; the master there is the Christian minister or any Christian who would be faithful as a servant. In verses 39 and 40, Jesus shifts the emphasis of the parable to the Christian as being placed into the position of being the master of his house, and his accountability to guard his own heart so that sins would not enter in which would show that he was not prepared at all, and that he had failed to do what Christ had commanded him to do in preparation. It is possible, as verse 47 says, to have professed to be a Christian but by your works to deny Him and thus to be cut a portion with the unbelievers at the time of the general judgment at the last day. All of what I have mentioned here is what it means to "wait for God's Son from heaven." The application ought to be obvious. Are you waiting for Christ's Second Coming, his coming from heaven? This you ought to do by constant and continual examination of your heart to prepare for meeting him. For you will meet Him at your death to determine your eternal destiny. And you will meet Him at the Last Day when He comes and all the dead in Christ and the dead outside of Christ will be raised from the dead. What a day of judgment, day of wonders it will be for us all. Are you waiting for that great Day?

Then 2ndly and briefly - What does it mean to be delivered from the wrath to come?

Our text says that the Thessalonian believers were "waiting for God's Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come." The verse is not saying, "even Jesus who delivers us from the Great Tribulation time period, who Raptures us secretly, and bring us to heaven so that we will not experience God's wrath upon the earth." But yet, this is what many Christians have come to believe through Dispensational teaching. What is being spoken about here is the wrath of God against unbelieving and unrepentant sinners which they will experience in their soul first hand, beginning on the Day of Judgment when

they are cast into the lake of fire and suffer torments there forever. They are under the wrath of God now if they do not have Jesus Christ as their true Savior, for it says in John 3: 36, "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." And John 3: 18 says, "He who believes in Christ is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Begotten Son of God." "And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." Let us not fool ourselves or others as Christians. Christ did not die on the cross simply so that we might escape whatever judgments God might pour out upon men's bodies in this present life in times of trouble that will come before Christ returns. Christ has said, "In the world you shall have tribulation." "But be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." The whole thought of the Christian who would be a faithful servant is this. "Am I so waiting and watching for Christ's coming, that I am preparing myself for that Day by trusting in Him, working for Him, serving Him in life and death, looking forward to all that He will do to help me by His grace to be faithful, so that I can with a clear conscience say, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain?" That is waiting for God's Son from heaven. And I believe that such a person will surely be delivered from the wrath to come.